

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 /016 R

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APPROVED BY S/S-O:M.TANNER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 227504 TOSEC 130081

FOLLOWING REPEAT MEXICO 8352 ACTION SECSTATE SEP 24.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 8352

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJECT: LOPEZ PORTILLO --- FIRST REACTIONS

REF: A. MEXICO 8316; B. MEXICO 8317

1. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NOW APPEARING THOSE MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACKS WHO CLAIM TO HAVE SUSPECTED ALL ALONG THAT TREASURY SECRETARY LOPEZ PORTILLO WOULD BE HIS PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, NEARLY EVERYONE HERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT OFF-GUARD BY HIS SELECTION. LOPEZ TRULY WAS EL TAPADO -- THE VEILED ONE.

2. PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA SENT MESSAGE TO AMBASSADOR (THROUGH INTERIOR SUB-SECRETARY GUTIERREZ BARRIOS, NOT VIA NOTE AS REPORTED REFTEL B) INFORMING HIM OF SELECTION OF LOPEZ PORTILLO. PRESIDENT, WHO SENT ABRAZO, SAID LOPEZ WAS MAGNIFICENT CHOICE, "A GOOD CATHOLIC", NOT PRO-COMMUNIST OR LEFTIST, A DEMOCRAT THOUGH "IN THE MEXICAN TRADITION", AND AN EXPERIENCED PUBLIC SERVANT WITH SERVICE IN SECRETARIATS OF NATIONAL PATRIMONY AND PRESIDENCY AS WELL AS TREASURY. GUTIERREZ BARRIOS INDICATED THAT LOPEZ HAD BEEN AWARE OF
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HIS SELECTION FORABOUT A WEEK BUT, IN RESPONSE TO AMBAS-

SADOR'S QUESTION, SAID HE THOUGHT MOYA PALENCIA DID NOT KNOW UNTIL THAT VERY DAY. DISAPPOINTMENT AMONG SUPPORTERS OF GOVERNMENT SECRETARY MOYA PALENCIA NATURALLY IS ACUTE BUT MOYA WAS AMONG FIRST TO SEND CONGRATULATIONS TO LOPEZ. (ACCORDING TO VARIOUS OTHER SOURCES, MOYA AND OTHER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES LUNCHEDED WITH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA YESTERDAY BUT LEARNED OF THE NEWS FIRST FROM PUBLIC SOURCES.)

3. REACTION OF BUSINESSMEN WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED THUS FAR HAS BEEN GENERALLY FAVORABLE THOUGH SOME ARE AT LEAST PUT OUT (AS IS EXCELSIOR IN EDITORIAL) OVER METHOD AND SECRECY OF SELECTION PROCESS AND MOST WOULD HAVE PREFERRED MOYA. SOME HAVE NOTED THAT LOPEZ WAS PRESIDENT'S OLDEST AND CLOSEST FRIEND (SUGGESTING "CONTINUISMO"), AND PROBABLY MOST BUSINESSMEN, BOTH MEXICAN AND U.S., TEND TO ASSOCIATE LOPEZ WITH HIGHER TAXES. NEVERTHELESS, WELL-INFORMED AND PROMINENT INDIVIDUAL BUSINESSMEN HAVE EXPRESSED TO AMBASSADOR AND EMBOFFS THEIR DELIGHT WITH LOPEZ' SELECTION NOTING THAT HE IS KNOWLEDGABLE, EXPERIENCED, AND "WE CAN WORK WITH HIM".

4. AMBASSADOR TODAY HAD PREVIOUSLY-ARRANGED MEETING WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL OJEDA PAULLADA. SPEAKING IN CONFIDENTIAL TONES (NONE OF HIS SUBORDINATES WAS PRESENT), OJEDA SAID THAT MOYA PALENCIA -- "ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS" -- WAS TAKING THE DEVELOPMENT WELL. TURNING TO SUBJECT OF LOPEZ PORTILLO, OJEDA EMPHASIZED HIS PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CLOSENESS TO HIM. NOT ONLY DID OJEDA WORK DIRECTLY FOR LOPEZ EARLY IN THEIR CAREERS, BUT ALSO LOPEZ WAS A WITNESS AT OJEDA'S WEDDING AND GODFATHER OF AT LEAST ONE OF OJEDA'S CHILDREN. OJEDA'S TONE AND COMMENTS SEEM OPTIMISTIC IN TERMS OF HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE, I.E. THE POSSIBILITY OF A SIGNIFICANT POSITION IN THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. (GUTIERREZ BARRIOS, LIKE OJEDA, ALREADY SEEMS TO VISUALIZE HIMSELF AS NEXT MINISTER OF INTERIOR...)

5. ECHEVERRIA'S REFERENCE TO LOPEZ' CATHOLICISM WAS NOTED ABOVE. WELL-INFORMED CONTACT OF AMBASSADOR WAS NOT THAT CERTAIN OF HOW DEVOUT A CATHOLIC LOPEZ MAY BE. IT IS PERHAPS NOTEWORTHY THAT IN INITIAL TELEVISION INTERVIEW YESTERDAY LOPEZ QUOTED ST. THOMAS AQUINAS REFERRING TO HIM CONFIDENTIAL

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AS "EL DIVINO FILOSOFO".

6. LOPEZ' WIFE CARMEN HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT CONSPICUOUS AMONG CABINET WIVES, SOMETIMES FLASHY IN APPEARANCE AND DRESS AND HEAVILY MADE UP. SHE WAS, AS LOPEZ MENTIONED IN TELEVISION INTERVIEW, A CONCERT PIANIST WHO GAVE UP HER CAREER TO MARRY HIM.

7. LOPEZ' FIRST COMMENTS TO REPORTERS SEEMED MODERATE: HE REFUSED TO CHARACTERIZE HIMSELF AS EITHER LEFTIST OR RIGHTIST; HE BELIEVED IN THE MIXED ECONOMY; HE WOULD CONTINUE PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

8. SUPPORTERS OF LOPEZ (TWO AIDES TO NATIONAL PATRIMONY SECRETARY JAVIER ALEJO) PREDICTED TO EMBOFF THAT THE RHETORIC OF THE GOM WOULD COOL TO SANER LEVELS UNDER LOPEZ AND THAT LOPEZ WOULD BE A "CONSOLIDATOR", FOLLOWING UP ECHEVERRIA'S GOOD INITIATIVES IN A MORE ORDERLY WAY. THEY, OF COURSE, WERE BULLISH ON HIS PERSONAL QUALITIES: STRONG WILL, INTELLIGENCE, SENSITIVITY, FLEXIBILITY, AND WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN.

9. LOPEZ' CABINET, OF COURSE, WILL NOT BE ANNOUNCED UNTIL DECEMBER 1976, BUT IMMEDIATE SPECULATION INCLUDES HIS COLLEAGUES AT TREASURY, RAMON BETETA, CARLOS TELLO, GILBERTO RUIZ ALMADA, PLUS OTHERS SUCH AS JAVIER ALEJO AND LABOR SECRETARY PORFIRIO MUNOZ-LEDO. FIRST SIGNIFICANT RUMOR IS THAT PRI PRESIDENT REYES HEROLES WILL RESIGN IN TWO OR THREE DAYS PERHAPS TO BE REPLACED BY MUNOZ-LEDO. (IF RESIGNATION IS ACCEPTED, THIS WOULD SEEM TO CONFIRM STORIES OF RIFT INSIDE PRI.)

10. MOST OBSERVERS ARE STILL DIGESTING LOPEZ' SELECTION AND MEANINGFUL COMMENT ON THE REACTION OF SIGNIFICANT SECTORS OF MEXICAN PUBLIC OPINION MUST AWAIT COMPLETION OF THIS PROCESS. THE EMBASSY WILL REPORT REACTION IN GREATER DETAIL, AS IT DEVELOPS.

11. FULL BIOGRAPHIC REPORT COMING IN SEPTEMBER.

12. POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS OF LOPEZ' SELECTION VARIES ACCORD-
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ING TO PROFESSION OF PERSON OFFERING VIEWS -- BUSINESSMEN STRESSING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECHEVERRIA AND LOPEZ, PLUS IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITY ("A STREAK OF LEFTISM") AND PRESIDENT'S POWER TO NAME HIS CHOICE, POLITICIANS EMPHASIZING CLASH BETWEEN FRONTRUNNERS. ONE EMBASSY CONTACT IN POLITICAL GROUP WHICH FAVORED CERVANTES' CANDIDACY CALLED SELECTION A "RECONCILIATION OF INTERESTS", IMPLYING MOYA AND CERVANTES HAD CANCELLED EACH OTHER OUT. EMBASSY CONTACTS IN GOVERNANCE HAD SIMILAR ANALYSIS -- CERVANTES HAD OVERTAKEN MOYA IN PRESIDENT'S FAVOR BUT OPPOSITION TO CERVANTES HAD BEEN TOO STRONG FOR PRESIDENT TO NAME HIM. JOVA UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, ELECTION CANDIDATES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE227504
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:M.TANNER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750331-0192
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750919/aaaaaqbu.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MEXICO 8316, 75 MEXICO 8317
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 SEP 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <06 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOPEZ PORTILLO --- FIRST REACTIONS
TAGS: PINT, MX, (LOPEZ PORTILLO, JOSE)
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006